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ABSTRACT

An information retrieval system allows a user to navigate through a plurality of informational items for a desired informational item, and upon selection of an information item, presents other informational items related to the selected informational item. The information retrieval system in accordance with the principles of the present invention maintains a database that defines a relational association between a plurality of informational items in the system. The relational association is based on historical navigational behavior of users of the information retrieval system, and includes a relationship type, which is based on the characteristic similarities between the informational items, and relationship strength, which is based on the historical frequency of any related informational items being selected by a user within the same information retrieval session. When a navigation from one informational item to another information item is detected, the relationship type and the relationship strength of the two informational items are determined and stored in the database. During a subsequent selection of an informational item, any related informational items related to the selected informational item are sorted based on the respective relationship types and relationship strengths, and are provided in a sorted list from which the user can select. In an aspect of the present invention, the inventive informational retrieval system is utilized in a help information retrieval system to provide a dynamic context sensitive mapping of help informational items. The inventive informational retrieval system in accordance with the principles of the present invention provides a convenient and economical retrieval of the one desired informational item while leveraging the investment of time and effort made during prior information retrieval sessions.